

Status of Human Services and Education Funding Under Supplemental COVID-19 Packages

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Executive Summary

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA; PL 116-127) and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act; 116-136) included billions of dollars in supplemental funding for human services and education programs as well as various flexibilities for the states and counties responsible for administering these programs. This memo provides an overview of steps the federal government has taken to implement these new resources.

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FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE

[COVID-19 Landing Page](#)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Supplemental Funding: The CARES Act provided **\$15.5 billion** in contingency reserve funding for the Secretary of Agriculture to allocate as deemed necessary to support costs should SNAP participation exceed budget estimates. **The status of this funding is unknown.**

Administrative Flexibilities: USDA is granting states significant program flexibilities and contingencies to best serve program participants across its 15 nutrition programs. Flexibilities within SNAP include:

- **Emergency Allotments:** FNS is approving states to issue emergency supplements to SNAP households that normally receive less than the maximum benefit. [Approved in all 50 states plus District of Columbia](#). According to USDA, implementation of this option has resulted in an additional \$2 billion in SNAP benefits (a 40 percent increase).
- **Pandemic EBT:** FNS is allowing states to provide SNAP benefits to children who normally receive free or reduced-price school meals. [Approved in Arizona, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina and Rhode Island](#).
- **Re-Enrollment Flexibilities:** FNS is providing flexibility for states to extend deadlines for participants re-enrolling to receive SNAP benefits.
- **Adjustments to Interview Requirements:** FNS is allowing states to adjust interview requirements for SNAP applicants. [Automatically applies nationwide](#)
- **Able-bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) Time Limit Suspension:** As directed by the FFCRA, FNS issued guidance to states suspending the time limit associated with ABAWD work requirements during the national emergency. [Automatically applies nationwide](#).
- **Nationwide Flexibility for Quality Control (QC) Interviews:** FNS is allowing SNAP quality control interviews to be conducted by phone (through May 2020) and extending certain case review deadlines (through June 2020).
- **Online Purchasing Pilots:** FNS is allowing states to expedite the implementation of [online purchasing](#) with currently authorized SNAP online retailers. [Operational in Alabama, Iowa, Nebraska, New York, Oregon, and Washington State; pending in Arizona, California, Florida, Idaho, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Texas, West Virginia and the District of Columbia](#). With these 16 states, more than half of all households receiving SNAP will have access to online purchasing.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

Supplemental Funding: The Families First Coronavirus Response provided **\$500 million** in supplemental funding for WIC through the existing formula to cover increases in program participation. **FNS has not yet released this funding—we are hearing it may take until July.**

Administrative Flexibilities: USDA is granting states significant program flexibilities and contingencies to best serve program participants across its 15 nutrition programs. Flexibilities within WIC include:

- **Physical Presence Waivers:** FNS is allowing participants to enroll or re-enroll in WIC without visiting a clinic in person and postpone certain medical tests. [Operational in all 50 states plus the district of Columbia.](#)
- **Remote Benefit Issuance Waivers:** FNS is allowing WIC agencies to issue benefits remotely so participants don't have to pick up their WIC benefits in person. [Operational in all states \(plus the District of Columbia\) except Wisconsin/](#)
- **Food Package Substitution Waivers:** FNS is allowing WIC agencies to substitute certain food package items when availability is limited. Agencies can also change their approved-foods lists as needed. [Operational in all states plus the District of Columbia except for Kentucky, New York, Michigan, Mississippi and Oklahoma.](#)
- **Minimum Stocking Requirements Waivers:** FNS is working with states to address supply challenges for stores that accept WIC. [State agencies with approved waivers are Arkansas, California, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Tennessee.](#)
- **Extended Benefits Issuance Waivers:** FNS is allowing WIC state agencies to issue up to four months of benefits on EBT cards at one time, to reduce the need for contact with WIC staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. [State agencies with approved waivers are Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Ohio and Texas.](#)

[ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES \(HHS\)](#)

[COVID-19 Landing Page](#)

[Child Care and Development Block Grant \(CCDBG\) | \[Office of Child Care\]\(#\)](#)

Supplemental Funding: The CARES Act provides **\$3.5 billion** in supplemental funding for CCDBG. These supplemental funds can be used to provide child care assistance to health care sector employees, emergency responders, sanitation workers, and other workers deemed essential during the response to the coronavirus, without regard to the income eligibility requirements. Last week, the Office of Child Care within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) [released the state, territory and tribal allocations of these funds](#). **ACF has not yet disbursed the funds but is working to do so as quickly as possible.**

Administrative Flexibilities: [CCDF lead agencies](#) will have a good amount of discretion over determining [which flexibilities to deploy](#) in response to COVID-19 and how to use this supplemental funding. In some cases, States may need to enact State legislation or regulation in order to take advantage of these flexibilities. They also may need to submit a Plan amendment or waiver request to the Office of Child Care. Due to the emergency, CCDF lead agencies may:

- **Use Quality Dollars to Improve or Maintain Quality and Supply**
- **Change Provider Payment Practices for Subsidies**
- **Change CCDF Eligibility Criteria and/or Priority Rules for Children/Families**
- **Broaden the Lead Agency's Definition of Protective Services**
- **Change Eligibility Redetermination Policies**
- **Waive or Reduce Co-Payments for Impacted Families**

[Head Start | \[Office of Head Start\]\(#\)](#)

Supplemental Funding: The CARES Act provided **\$750 million** in supplemental funding for Head Start to support preventative, preparedness, and response activities related to the coronavirus. Of this amount, up to \$500 million is available for programs to operate supplemental summer programs and about \$250 million is available for one-time activities in response to COVID-19. [The Office of Head Start has released new details about this supplemental funding.](#)

- **Summer program supplement (\$500 million)**— all Head Start programs that can demonstrate they have the capacity to deliver high-quality summer learning experiences to promote school readiness and successful transitions to kindergarten are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants must submit a Summer Program Supplement in the Head Start

Enterprise System (HSES). Application for these funds is voluntary. **Applications will be made available in late April.**

- **One-Time Activities in Response to COVID-19 (\$250 million)**—all Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grantees are eligible to receive funding for one-time activities in response to COVID-19. For this funding, each grantee will be able to apply for a proportionate amount based on their total funded enrollment. **These funds will be combined with the existing FY 2020 Cost-of-Living-Adjustment and Quality Improvement (COLA/QI) applications due on May 15, 2020,** for which OHS will provide further guidance and instruction. Awards are expected to be processed beginning in June. **OHS will also be waiving the non-Federal match requirement for these funds in FY 2020.**

Administrative Flexibilities: Several flexibilities are available to Head Start grantees during the COVID-19 emergency. The following waivers are available as provided in the Head Start Act:

- **Waiving non-federal share:** Programs may request a waiver of all or part of their 20% non-federal share based on emergency or disaster because other organizations may not be able to provide the usual contributions to Head Start grantees during this time.
- **Waiving administrative cost limitations:** Programs may request a waiver of the 15% administrative cost limitation if additional program management attention is needed to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- **Budget transfers:** Grantees can shift up to \$250,000 between budget categories without prior ACF approval. **Expedited procurement:** Procurement may be undertaken without utilizing the grantee's usual competitive practices if necessary to respond to COVID-19.
- **Other flexibilities:** In addition, the guidance from [ACF-HS-IM-19-01 General Disaster Recovery Flexibilities](#) applies to Head Start programs impacted by COVID-19. Although there are no formal waivers for the number of days of service provided via center-based programs, or number of home visits and socializations provided via home-based programs, programs will not be expected to make up the days missed due to COVID-19.

[The Community Services Block Grant | Office of Community Services](#)

Supplemental Funding: The CARES Act provided **\$1 billion** in supplemental funding for CSBG. **The Office of Community Services has not yet released this funding but is working to distribute CARES Act supplemental funds for CSBG as expeditiously as possible.** Additional guidance specific to CARES Act supplemental funds will follow that funding release. In the interim, CSBG grantees are asked to place an immediate priority on re-programming existing resources to meet the highest priority needs.

Administrative Flexibilities:

- **Expanded income eligibility:** Per the CARES Act, the supplemental CSBG funding may be used to provide services to individuals earning up to 200 percent of the federal poverty line (a change from the existing statutory cap at 125 percent of the federal poverty line.)
- **Emergency response activities:** Additionally, within existing allocations, state CSBG funding may be used to support emergency response that is consistent with statutorily allowable activities. State CSBG-designated organizations are not required to request a federal waiver to utilize their existing CSBG funding to support disaster response and assistance to eligible low-income individuals and families. Provided there is no change to the proportionate share of CSBG funds allocated to eligible entities, states are not required to submit plan amendments to OCS for changes to local Community Action Plans.
- [More guidance can be found here.](#)

[Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program \(LIHEAP\) | Office of Community Services](#)

Supplemental Funding: The CARES Act provided \$900 billion in supplemental funding for LIHEAP. **OCS has not released these funds.**

Administrative Flexibilities: LIHEAP funding may be used to respond to the COVID-19 so long as there is a connection to residential home energy. LIHEAP grantees may, for example:

- Choose to adjust their benefit matrices, program operation timeframes, eligibility rules, coordination with heating and cooling shelters, and other related policies and procedures in light of changing need during the COVID-19 situation—such as lost wages, jobs, increased home heating and cooling expenditures, temporary shelter needs, and more.
- Adjust their obligations of LIHEAP funding for staffing to ensure that there is coverage for LIHEAP services when staff absences occur due to COVID-19.
- [More guidance can be found here.](#)

[Child Welfare Services | Children's Bureau](#)

Supplemental Funding: The CARES Act provided \$45 million for grants to states, territories and tribes to support the child welfare needs of families during the crisis, and to help keep families together. **ACF has not released this funding.**

Administrative Flexibilities: The Children's Bureau has provided guidance for child welfare agencies on flexibilities they may deploy to respond to COVID-19 and other best practices, including:

- [Guidance About Seeking Personal Protective Equipment for Child Welfare Workers](#)
- [Use of Federal Funds for Cell Phones and Personal Protective Equipment](#)
- [Guidance Regarding Fingerprint and Caseworker Visit Requirements During COVID-19 Response](#)
- [Postponement of Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Reviews and National Youth in Transition Database Reviews](#)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

COVID-19 Landing Page

Elementary and Secondary Education

Supplemental Funding:

- **Elementary and Secondary Education Relief Fund:** The CARES Act provided **\$13.5 billion** in direct formula funding for Local Education Agencies (LEAs), 90 percent of which states will distribute to local educational agencies according to the formula for Title I grants under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. These funds will support coronavirus-response activities such as planning for and coordinating during long term school closures, purchasing educational technology to support online learning for all students and additional activities allowed for under ESEA. **The Department of Education has not yet released these funds.**
- **Governor’s Emergency Relief Fund:** The CARES Act provided **\$3 billion** in flexible funding for states that governors may allocate at their discretion for emergency support grants to local educational agencies that have been most significantly impacted by coronavirus. These funds will support the educational continuity for elementary and secondary school students as well as emergency support for state institutions of higher education. **The Department of Education released this funding to states on April 14.** [The state-by-state allocation of this funding can be found here.](#)

Administrative Flexibilities: The Department of Education has provided numerous flexibilities to states to respond to the educational challenges presented by COVID-19, including:

- Broad flexibilities to [bypass ESSA mandated testing](#) for the 2019-2020 school year due to COVID-19 national emergency. State education leaders can find the [waiver application here](#).
- Waivers of [fiscal requirements](#).

ADMINISTRATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

COVID-19 Landing Page

Older Americans Act Programs

Supplemental Funding:

- The Families First Coronavirus Response Act provided \$80 million for Congregate Nutrition Services and \$160 million for Home-Delivered Nutrition Services. **ACL released this funding on March 18.** [State-by-state allocations can be found here.](#)
- The CARES Act provided \$900 million for programs that serve seniors and individuals through the Older Americans Act (OAA). **This funding was released on April 21.** [State-by-state allocations can be found here.](#) The funds include:
 - **\$200 million for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS)**, which will help greater numbers of older adults shelter in place to minimize their exposure to COVID-19. These include personal care assistance; help with household chores and grocery shopping; transportation to essential services (such as grocery stores, banks, or doctors) when necessary; and case management.
 - **\$480 million for home-delivered meals for older adults.** With this funding, states can also expand “drive-through” or “grab-and-go” meals for older adults who typically would participate in meal programs at community centers and other locations that have been closed due to social distancing measures.
 - **\$85 million for Centers for Independent Living** to provide direct and immediate support and services to individuals with disabilities who are experiencing disruptions to their independent, community-based living due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Services will ensure individuals with disabilities have the supports they need to safely stay in their homes or return home after a hospitalization or institutionalization during (and directly after) COVID-19.
 - **\$20 million for nutrition and related services for Native American Programs** to help tribes and tribal organizations provide meals and supportive services directly to Native American elders.
 - **\$100 million for the National Family Caregiver Support Program** to expand a range of services that help family and informal caregivers provide support for their loved ones at home. These include counseling, respite care, training, and connecting people to information.
 - **\$20 million to support State Long-term Care Ombudsman programs** in providing consumer advocacy services for residents of long-term care facilities across the country.

Restrictions on visitation have significantly increased demand for ombudsman services, as families seek assistance in ensuring the well-being of their loved ones. Ombudsman programs will seek to expand their virtual presence to residents and their families, and continue to promote the health, safety welfare, and rights of residents in the context of COVID-19. This funding will give Ombudsman programs the flexibility to hire additional staff and purchase additional technology, associated hardware, and personal protective equipment once in-person visits resume.

Administrative Flexibilities: ACL has provided guidance and flexibilities for Older Americans Act and other programs which can be [found at their COVID-19 landing page](#).